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WASHINGTON - SOVIET AND WARSAW PACT FORCES WOULD FACE GREAT RISKS AND COSTS IF THEY CHALLENGED U.S. AND OTHER WESTERN MILITARY FORCES IN EUROPE; THE PERSIAN GULF OR ON THE HIGH SEAS; A PRESTIGIOUS PANEL HAS FOUND.

THE FINDING OF THE CARNEGIE PANEL ON U.S. SECURITY AND THE FUTURE OF ARMS CONTROL; RELEASED WEDNESDAY; RUNS COUNTER TO THE IMPRESSION MANY HAVE THAT THE SOVIETS ARE 10 FEET TALL MILITARILY.

HOWEVER; THE STUDY OF THE 26-MEMBER PANEL; ESTABLISHED BY THE CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE; DID CONTAIN A WARNING THAT CURRENT TRENDS IN MILITARY SPENDING AND PRACTICES COULD PLACE THE WEST AT A DISADVANTAGE SHOULD A CONFLICT COME IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS.

PRESIDENT REAGAN; THE CONGRESS AND THE U.S. PUBLIC FACE TOUGH DECISIONS IN COUNTERING THOSE TRENDS; THE STUDY WARNED. THE PANEL; COMPOSED OF MILITARY; NATIONAL SECURITY; BUSINESS; LEGAL; SCIENTIFIC AND JOURNALISTIC EXPERTS WITH DIFFERING VIEWS; URGED THAT THE FOLLOWING POINTS BE CONSIDERED IN MAKING THOSE DECISIONS:

- THE TRADITIONAL APPROACH OF COMPARING U.S.-SOVIET DEFENSE SPENDING HAS "LIMITED VALUE" GIVEN THE TECHNIQUES THE CIA USES IN COMPUTING SUCH TOTALS. "THE CIA HAS DIFFICULTY FINDING OUT HOW MUCH OF WHAT IS PRODUCED AND AT WHAT PRICE IN RUBLES;" THE PANEL FOUND. "EVEN IF THE CIA HAD FULLY ACCURATE INFORMATION ON THE RUBLE VALUE OF RESOURCES THE SOVIETS ARE PUTTING INTO DEFENSE; THE PROBLEM OF ASSIGNING A TRUE DOLLAR VALUE FOR THOSE RESOURCES REMAINS." (FOR EXAMPLE; U.S. SOLDIERS ARE BETTER TRAINED; EDUCATED AND PAID AND U.S. TECHNOLOGY IS SEVERAL LEVELS ABOVE ITS SOVIET COUNTERPART IN SOPHISTICATION.)

- EVEN IF MONETARY COMPARISONS WERE AVAILABLE; THEY ARE NOT A TRUE INDICATION OF RELATIVE MILITARY CAPABILITIES. THEY WOULD NOT REFLECT THE TECHNOLOGICAL SUPERIORITY OF WEAPONS; THE DIFFERENT THREATS THOSE WEAPONS AND TROOPS ARE DESIGNED TO MEET; OR THE CONTRIBUTION OF ALLIES.

- CIA SPENDING COMPARISONS; THE KEY SOURCE OF DEBATE ON THE NEED TO INCREASE U.S. DEFENSE SPENDING; DO AT LEAST GIVE "A SENSE OF SPENDING TRENDS;" THE PANEL FOUND. "SOVIET INCREASES IN DEFENSE EXPENDITURES; ESPECIALLY IN THE AREA OF INVESTMENT; HAVE LED AND WILL CONTINUE TO LEAD TO IMPROVED MILITARY CAPABILITY RELATIVE TO THE UNITED STATES . . . IT LOOKS AS THOUGH THE TROUBLING TRENDS WILL CONTINUE."

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